

## **BASIC INFORMATION**

### **A Guide for Self-Represented Litigants**

#### **Kern County Superior Court**

You are scheduled to appear in court. You will be appearing in court without an attorney. You are not alone—every year more people are doing the same thing. The courts may seem complicated and confusing, but there are lots of resources to help you. This pamphlet provides general information that will help you to prepare for any kind of court appearance. Preparation ahead of time will help the judge to understand your case and to make a fair ruling.

#### ***What should I wear to court?***

Court is a business type of environment. Dress as if you are going to a job interview. Be clean and neat. Shorts, tank tops and flip-flop sandals are not allowed.

#### ***When should I arrive at court?***

You need to arrive at the courthouse at least 30 minutes before your scheduled court appearance. It is very important that you allow plenty of time to park and find your assigned courtroom. If you are not in the courtroom when your case is called, the judge may dismiss your case, make a decision without hearing your side of the story or issue a warrant for your arrest.

#### ***Where should I park?***

Parking space is hard to find near the courthouses in downtown Bakersfield. Allow plenty of time to locate parking and to find the courtroom where your case is scheduled. A train runs near both downtown courthouses, which may cause a delay.

Parking is available to the public at the following locations:

- Parking structure at 1115 Truxtun Avenue—first floor only. Enter from M Street.
- Parking lot behind 1215 Truxtun Avenue-north and south of the railroad tracks. Enter from L Street.

Some of these spaces are designated for a limited time. Cars that are

parked longer than the posted time limit will be ticketed. Handicapped parking is available on the street in front of 1415 Truxtun Avenue. There are also handicapped spaces available in all parking lots.

### ***What about court security?***

Upon entering the courthouse, you will be expected to pass through a metal detector. Any metal object on your body must be removed and inspected, including belt buckles and steel-toed shoes.

### ***How do I find the correct courtroom?***

For most cases, court calendars are posted in the lobby of the courthouse. If you need help in locating your name, ask for help at the court information booth. Contact the Sheriff's Deputy (the bailiff) in the courtroom if you are not sure that you are in the correct courtroom, or if you need to leave briefly for any reason.

### ***What materials should I bring?***

Bring copies of all documents that you have filed with the courts so far. You won't be able to get these documents from the court before your court appearance. It's really important that you know your case number.

Also bring documents that support what you want the judge to know about your case. You should bring original documents and one copy if possible. The judge may ask to keep the copy for more careful review. Put your evidence together in logical order so that it is easy for the judge to understand your side of the story.

### ***Do I need witnesses?***

Witnesses are people who can support what you want the judge to know about your case. It helps your case if your witnesses have seen or heard what you want the judge to know.

### ***How long will I have to wait?***

That depends on how many people are scheduled to appear at the same time as you. The judge may not call the cases in the same order that they are listed on the calendar. Some cases will take less time, and they may be handled first. Depending on your case, you

may need to plan on being in court all day.

***Other helpful hints:***

- The proper way to address the judge is “your honor”.
- Speak directly to the judge, not to the other party in the case.
- If you need special services for a disability, please notify the courts ahead of time so that arrangements can be made.
- Speak properly—don’t use foul language.
- Turn cell phones and pagers to “off” or vibrate mode.
- Food and/or drinks are not allowed in the courthouse.

**IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

(661) 868-5393	Kern County Superior Court
(661) 868-4815	Family Law Facilitator’s Office
(661) 868-4530	Family Court Services (Mediation)
(661) 868-2532	Small Claims Advisor
(661) 868-2486	Traffic
(661) 868-4885	Guardianship / Probate
(661) 868-5320	Kern County Law Library
(661) 868-2644	Court interpreter services
(661) 868-4957	Special services required for a disability

*More information is also available on these websites:*

<a href="http://www.co.kern.ca.us/courts">www.co.kern.ca.us/courts</a>	Kern County Superior Court
<a href="http://www.kerncountylawlibrary.org">www.kerncountylawlibrary.org</a>	Kern County Law Library
<a href="http://www.sccba.com/kcba">www.sccba.com/kcba</a>	Kern County Bar Association
<a href="http://www.cencal.bbb.org">www.cencal.bbb.org</a>	Better Business Bureau of the San Joaquin Valley
<a href="http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov">www.courtinfo.ca.gov</a>	Administrative Office of the Courts Self-Help Site
<a href="http://www.dca.ca.gov">www.dca.ca.gov</a>	California Department of Consumer Affairs, Consumer Information Center

**OUR MISSION: “...to impartially dispense justice to all residents of the County of Kern.”**